

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1. (currently amended) A mutant of a biotin binding protein having improved properties compared to the wild type protein, wherein the mutant has six intermonomeric disulphide bridges in the tetramer, and the protein is selected from the group comprising chicken avidin, bacterial streptavidin, other poultry avidin, such as avidin protein from duck, goose, ostrich or turkey, and chicken avidin-related proteins (AVRs).

2-5. (canceled)

6. (currently amended) A mutant of a biotin binding protein of claim [[3]] 1, wherein the tetramer has one disulphide bridge between monomers 1-3 and one disulphide bridge between monomers 2-4 and two disulphide bridges between monomers 1-4 and two disulphide bridges between monomers 2-3.

7. (currently amended) A mutant of a biotin binding protein of claim [[4]] 6, wherein the amino acid residue 117 has been changed to cysteine.

8. (currently amended) A mutant of a biotin binding protein of claim [[5]] 6, wherein the isoleucine residue 106 has been changed to cysteine and aspartate residue 86 has been changed to cysteine.

9. (original) A mutant of a biotin binding protein of claim 6, wherein the amino acid residue 117 has been changed to cysteine, the isoleucine residue 106 has been changed to cysteine and aspartate residue 86 has been changed to cysteine.

10. (previously presented) A mutant of a biotin binding protein of claim 7, wherein the protein is chicken avidin and the amino acid residue 117 is isoleucine.

11. (previously presented) A mutant of a biotin binding protein of claim 7, wherein the protein is AVR1 or AVR2 and the amino acid residue 117 is asparagine.

12. (previously presented) A mutant of a biotin binding protein of claim 7, wherein the protein is AVR3-7 and the amino acid residue 117 is tyrosine.

13. (currently amended) A mutant of biotin binding protein of claim [[2]] 1, wherein the protein is AVR1, AVR3, AVR6 or AVR7, wherein the cysteine 60 has been changed to any other amino acid.

14. (currently amended) A mutant of a biotin binding protein of claim [[2]] 1, wherein the protein is chicken avidin, and the four intramonomeric disulphide bridges in the tetramer have been deleted.

15. (currently amended) Thermally stable AVR4/5 having six intermonomeric disulphide bridges in tetramer.

16. (currently amended) A mutant of a biotin binding protein of claim [[2]] 1, wherein the protein is an avidin related protein AVR4/5.

17. (original) A mutant of a biotin binding protein of claim 16, wherein asparagine 43 of AVR4/5 has been changed to glutamic acid (AVR4/5(N43E)).

18. (previously presented) A mutant of a biotin binding protein of claim 16, wherein cysteine 124 in AVR4/5 has been changed to any amino acid.

19. (previously presented) A mutant of a biotin binding protein of claim 16, wherein cysteine 124 in AVR4/5 has been changed to any amino acid and tyrosine 117 has been changed to cysteine.

20. (previously presented) A mutant of a biotin binding protein of claim 18, wherein cysteine 124 in AVR4/5 has been changed to serine.

21. (cancelled)

22. (new) A mutant of a biotin binding protein of claim 8, wherein the protein is chicken avidin and the amino acid residue 117 is isoleucine.

23. (new) A mutant of a biotin binding protein of claim 8, wherein the protein is AVR1 or AVR2 and the amino acid residue 117 is asparagine.

24. (new) A mutant of a biotin binding protein of claim 9, wherein the protein is AVR3-7 and the amino acid residue 117 is tyrosine.

25. (new) A mutant of a biotin binding protein of claim 9, wherein the protein is chicken avidin and the amino acid residue 117 is isoleucine.

26. (new) A mutant of a biotin binding protein of claim 9, wherein the protein is AVR1 or AVR2 and the amino acid residue 117 is asparagine.

27. (new) A mutant of a biotin binding protein of claim 10, wherein the protein is AVR3-7 and the amino acid residue 117 is tyrosine.